



Session 1: Introduction to TimeWise, 2nd Edition concepts

What is free time, and how can it benefit your students? Often, we don't think much about how or why we spend our free time, or why it's important to consider. The *TimeWise, 2nd Edition* program is designed to help students make the most of their free time by taking control of it, leading to more enjoyment and satisfaction in what they do. This material sets the stage for understanding the value of leisure time and encourages students to reflect on how they'll spend their time—both now and throughout their lives.

Subtopics

- What Is Free Time?
- What Is Fun?
- Connecting zones of regulation & benefits of how we spend our time

Note: These three separate subtopics may require three different sessions to cover the material.

Background for Teachers: Introduction to Free Time

Basic Ideas: When introducing the concept of free time and leisure to elementary students, here are some key points and ideas to help guide your session:

Subtopic 1: What is Free Time?

- Free time (or leisure time) is the time when you don't have to do something like homework or chores.
- It's when you get to choose what you want to do!

Why Does Free Time Matter?

- How we spend our free time can affect how we feel, both physically and emotionally.
- Free time can be healthy or unhealthy, exciting or boring—it all depends on the choices we make.

Benefits of Using Free Time Wisely

- Doing a variety of activities can make your free time more fun and fulfilling.
- Activities like sports, exploring nature, being creative, or spending time with family and friends are all great options.
- It's important to balance time alone with time spent with others—friends, siblings, parents and also to do things that help others.

Challenges with Free Time

- Sometimes, students might not know what to do with their free time. This could lead to boredom or just “hanging out.” It could also lead them staying in an activity too long (like tech use) even if it is no longer giving them benefits.
- Encourage them to think about fun, exciting, or creative ways to use their time!

Ways to Make the Most of Free Time

- Free time can be used for physical activities (like playing outside), creative pursuits (art, music, writing) or learning new things.

- It's also a chance to help others or explore new hobbies.
- The more students mix up their activities, the more benefits they'll experience!

Discussions & Activities:

Ideas to spark conversation

What is free time?

Engage students with the topic of free time using the questions offered below during circle time, or incorporate them into another part of the day. Consider using times like recess, choice time, or enrichment programs as a great opportunity for these conversations.

Student Goal:

- Identify how they spend their free time, recognize their feelings during those moments, and begin to make connections between how they use their time and how it impacts their well-being.

Time Frame:

20–30 minutes **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starter:

"Let's talk about free time. Do you know what that means? We are going to talk about it, share what we do and how it makes us feel."

Discussion Questions:

- **What is free time?** *(When are times during the day when no one tells you what to do, or you are not at school or doing chores? What do you call that? What does not feel like free time? Can you feel like you have free time at school?)*

- **How much free time do you have?** *(Do you feel like you have a lot of free time or just a little? What parts of the day feel free?)*
- **What do you usually do during your free time?** *(Do you play with friends, family members, draw, read, rest, play games?)*
- **What did you do when you got home from school yesterday?** *(Did you have a snack, watch TV, go outside?)*
- **What did you do over the weekend?** *(Did you visit anyone, play sports, go anywhere fun?)*
- **What do you do during recess? How does it make you feel?** *(Do you run around, talk to friends, or do something quiet? Do you feel happy, calm, or something else? Integrate with Zones of Regulation below)*

Subtopic 2: What is fun?

Engage students in choosing and planning a group activity that feels “fun” to them—and then do it! This can be a one-time experience or something you return to regularly. Try it as part of your daily routine, before heading to recess, or whenever there’s a natural opening in the day. You can adapt the activity as students build confidence and continue to explore the concept of fun. It can even become part of impromptu Choice Time!

Student Goal:

Explore the meaning of fun and leisure, recognize how it impacts their emotions, and practice planning and participating in a group activity that brings joy and connection.

Time Frame: Depends on how you structure it and when and for how long the “free-time” group activity event occurs

Example Conversation Starter:

"Most people enjoy having fun—but what that looks like can be different for everyone. We often have fun during our free or leisure time, but not always. Sometimes that time brings up other feelings or emotions, too. Let’s talk about what fun means to you."

Planning Questions:

Use the following questions to guide students in planning their group activity:

- What do you usually do for fun? (*playing games, drawing, sports, music?*)
- How does fun usually make you feel? (*happy, excited, relaxed?*)
- What are things you have to do in your free time that you don’t think are fun (e.g., chores, though we should not assume)? How do you usually feel doing those types of things? (*bored, annoyed, proud afterward?*)
- What would make the school day more fun? (*more games, music breaks, group projects?*)

Group Activity!

Plan a group activity (could be within this session or for another day)

Debrief Questions:

Once the group activity is completed, have a conversation with the students using these debrief questions:

- How was the event we planned? (*What did you like or not like?*)
- Did the activity meet your expectations for fun? Why or why not? (*Was it exciting, too short, surprising?*)
- How did you feel before, during, and after the activity? (*nervous, happy, tired?*)
- Was there anything you would change about how we planned or did the activity? (*More time? Different roles?*)
- What did you learn about fun and leisure time today? (*Something new you enjoy? A way to include others?*)

Subtopic 3: Connecting Zones of Regulation & benefits of how we spend our time:

Student Goal:

Begin to recognize how different activities affect their emotions and energy levels, and how they can make choices in their free time that support feeling calm, happy, focused, or energized in healthy ways.

Materials:

[Check out Zones of Regulation](#)

Time Frame:

15-30 minutes per session depending on age group.

Example Conversation Starter:

"Have you ever noticed how different activities make you feel different inside? Some help you feel calm, some give you energy, and some might even make you feel frustrated or out of control. Let's think about how the things we do—especially in our free time—can help us feel better or change how we're feeling."

- **This Activity can be:**
 - **Integrated into impromptu Choice Time when noticing a class needs a change of activity or help focusing.**
 - **Adapted for before or after recess, choice time or specials.**

Introduce Zones of Regulation: How it Works | The Zones of Regulation

Discussion Questions:

- **What zone do you feel like you are in right now?**
(Are you feeling calm, tired, silly, frustrated, or something else?)
- **What zones do we want to be in most of the time?**
(Green – calm, ready to learn; Blue – relaxed or resting?)
- **What zones do we want to avoid most of the time?**
(Red – angry or out of control? Yellow – too silly or distracted?)
- **What does the red zone feel like for you?**
(Do you ever feel so mad or overwhelmed that your body feels hot or loud inside? What helps you calm down?)
- **Is the red zone always bad, or is it a sign we need something?**
(Could it be a sign you need a break, or that you care a lot about something?)
- **How do you feel when you move from one zone to another?**
(What helps you go from red to yellow, or yellow to green? What does that feel like in your body?)
- **What do you do in your free time that helps you feel calm, focused, or happy?**
(Do you play outside, read, build something, talk to someone? How does that make you feel inside?)
- **Can you choose an activity to help you change your zone if you want to?**
(If you're in the blue zone and feeling low, what could you do to get energy? If you're in the red zone, what could help you feel calm?)
- **What are some physical, mental, or social benefits of how you spend your free time?**
(Does playing outside help your body? Does talking to a friend help your heart or brain?)
- **What zone do you want to be in right now? Do you want to stay where you are or change? How might you get there?**
(What's one thing you could do—like taking deep breaths, going for a walk, drawing, or talking to someone—to help you feel the way you want to feel?)



Session 2: Live Your Why and Explore Your Free Time

Overall Introduction To All Topics in Session 2

Free time is a special chance for kids to do things they enjoy and feel good about. This session helps students think about how they spend their free time, the different benefits they get from free time activities, what makes them happy, and how they can try new things. Through Live Your Why (another Healthy Lamoille Valley initiative) and passion projects, students will learn to explore their interests and make their free time more fun and meaningful.

Subtopics

1. Live Your Why Themes/Benefits to Explore
2. Benefits and Variety in Free Time
3. Explore Your Free Time
 - a. outside of school
 - b. during recess and choice time
4. Structured vs. Unstructured Free Time
5. Passion Projects and Skill Building

6. Using Live Your Why Wellness Themes to Plan and Reflect (Share Your Why)
7. Technology Use and Free Time

**Throughout this session's topics you can integrate [Zones of Regulation](#), as mentioned in Session 1.

Subtopic 1: Live Your Why Themes/Benefits to Explore:

Support students in exploring leisure benefits by focusing on the word “benefit” and what it means in this context of free time/leisure. One person may get multiple benefits from a single activity. Different people might experience different benefits from the same activity, but many individuals will share similar benefits from certain activities.

Student Goal:

Students will explore the benefits of leisure activities (using the "[Live Your Why!](#)" and other resources) towards their interest awareness and development.

Time Frame: 30 minutes **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Discussion:

- Start with a simple question “What is a benefit?”
- Ask about the benefits of some examples from their lives.
 - What benefits do you get from eating? (nutrition, family time, feeling full, energy, etc)
 - What kind of benefits do you get from (have them name different activities and think about the benefits)
 - bike riding
 - going to school
 - going to bed early
 - eating breakfast
- Now that we understand what benefits are, let’s connect the topic of benefits to how we spend out free time through our program Live Your Why.
- Discuss each of the themes from the "[Live Your Why!](#) Elementary Edition (online/and below).
 - Explore the Live Your Why website. [Live Your Why!](#)

Themes:

- Moving your body
- Connecting with people
- Working your brain
- What's in my future?
- Taking care of yourself
- Making memories
- Fun with nature
- Expressing yourself
- Getting to know your community
- What can I make with what I have?

Which of these activity topics do you like to do and what benefits do you get from each one?

Activity: Brainstorming and Sharing Leisure Activities

- Make a list of as many possible free time activities you can think of for when we're at home, at school, and in the community.
 - Could even do this as a competition between groups and then share out.
 - Have each student talk about the activities they do.
- Choose at least 4 Live Your Why categories to use in the next part of the activity.
- As students share, have them write or draw their responses on a whiteboard or chart paper under four or more categories (from Live Your Why).
 - Moving Your Body (physical)
 - Working Your Brain (mental)
 - Connecting with People (social)
 - Expressing Yourself (creative expression)

Reflection: Have students reflect on which themes they naturally gravitate towards and which ones they might want to explore further.

- “Do you notice that some of your favorite activities fall into more than one group? Or only one?”
- “What kinds of benefits do you want *more* of in your free time? How can you explore and plan for these?”)

Subtopic 2: Benefits and Variety in Free Time

The healthiest and most satisfied people engage in a variety of activities that provide many benefits (see the Live Your Why themes). One activity alone often doesn't offer all the benefits we need. And one activity can also offer us multiple benefits. A mix of activities adds up to better overall well-being.

Student goals:

- Recognize how they currently spend their free time.
- Understand that different activities can offer different kinds of benefits (like fun, learning, rest, or connection).
- Think about why having a variety of free time activities can be valuable.

Timeframe:

20–30 minutes but **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters:

- “What’s something you love to do when you have free time and what benefits does it give you?”
- “Why do you think it’s good to do different types of things that give you different benefits in your free time?”
- “What is missing from your free time?”
- “What would you like to do in your free time that you are not already doing?”

Activities:

Give students a blank template or a simple worksheet (for older kids, could use [TimeWise Workbook](#) pgs 4-5) to map their free time activities and the benefits they get from each.

For younger students: They can draw pictures or write the activities they do in their free time and label the benefit (or use simple icons/colors to indicate the benefit type).

Have students share their ideas for future exploration based on the benefits/themes they connected with most and ones they want to more of.

Encourage creative thinking—what new activities can they try to explore the benefits they are curious about?

Have students choose some they might like to do (as an individual or as a group) that will give them certain benefits.

Subtopic 3a: Exploring Your Free Time (outside of school)

Free time gives kids the chance to relax, be themselves, and learn what they enjoy. For this topic, students will reflect on how they currently spend their time outside of school and what benefits (physical, connection, fun, learning, resourcefulness, movement, creativity) they get from different activities. They'll also begin to notice which activities might not be helping them feel their best.

This topic can be explored not only through discussion but also through observing and reflecting on their free time outside of the school day.

Student goals:

- Explore how they currently use their free time outside of school.
- Identify the benefits they get from different activities.
- Build awareness of the difference between healthy and less healthy ways to use their time.

Time Frame:

- 30–45 minutes Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starter:

“What do you like to do when school is over or on the weekend? and who chooses what you do?”

“How do you feel after doing that activity? Is it different from how you felt before?” (ask about screen time related to this question)

“What are some things you do just because you enjoy them? What do you learn from them?”

Discussion Questions:

- **Daily/Weekly Time Use Mapping:** Have students draw or list what they usually do during their free time each day or week outside of school or program.

- **Discussion:** What do you notice? What activities help your body? Your brain? Your friendships?
- **Review Live Your Why (LYW) Themes:** Briefly show the Live Your Why wellness categories (Moving Your Body, Connecting with People, etc). Ask students to match one or two of their free time activities to the LYW themes.
- **Exploration:** Ask students what they would like more or less of outside of school?
- **Set a leisure goal** for the after school, before school, the weekend or next week or even an upcoming vacation.
- **Optional Extension (for younger grades):** Use [Zones of Regulation](#) to explore how different activities make them feel. [See Zones of Regulation Subtopic](#) for more on this.

Subtopic 3b: Exploring Your Free Time (during recess or choice time)

Student goals:

- Reflect on how they use their free time, especially during the school day.
- Build awareness of activities that support their well-being, using Live Your Why concepts.
- Learn and practice using tools to plan and reflect on how they spend their free time.

Time Frame:

- 30–45 minutes Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters:

“Did you have recess today? What did you do? If not, how do you feel about that? (was it indoors or outdoors)”

“What were the options for what you could do during recess/free time at school? What did you see others doing?”

“What was the best part of your recess today? What made it fun?”

“What was the worst part of recess? How might you address this? ”

“Was there something you wanted to do but didn’t get a chance to? Why?”

“How did you feel during recess—were you relaxed, excited, energetic, using your imagination, playing with a friend, wanting to play with a friend, or maybe something else?”

“If you could pick three fun things to do at recess tomorrow, what would you choose?”

Activities:

Ask: “Do you have free time at school? When?”

- Daily/Weekly Time Use Mapping: Have students draw or list what they usually do during their free time at school.
- Recess or Choice Time Reflection Buckets:
 - After recess, students place a small item (e.g., a rock, chip, or sticky note) in labeled buckets:
 - One version: Based on their emotional response (“I felt happy,” “I felt bored,” “I felt included”).
 - Another version: Based on the type of benefit (“I moved my body,” “I was creative,” “I connected with a friend”).
 - Another based on Zones of Regulation- See Session 1 (based on color code)

Group Discussion: What trends do the students notice? What helps them enjoy free time more? Are there things they'd like to try next time?

Planning Tools: Help students create a personal recess/choice-time planner. This could be as individuals or also a group activity.

Integrate Student Voice: Involve students in making suggestions for recess stations, indoor and outdoor play options, or new club time offerings. Talk about how not everyone enjoys or benefits from the same things—and that's okay!

Subtopic 4: Structured vs. Unstructured Free Time

Students benefit from having both planned activities and free play in their lives. This topic helps them understand the value of each and how a mix can help them feel balanced and happy.

Student goals:

- Learn the difference between structured (planned) and unstructured (free choice) time, and explore how they can add structure to unstructured time when helpful.
- Identify their own preferences for different types of time and understand how both can support their well-being.

Time Frame:

- 20–30 minutes Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters:

“What’s something you do at a set time every week?”

“What do you get to choose for yourself during the day?”

“Do you like to plan what you’ll do, or do you like to decide in the moment?”

These questions can be used during planning or reflection about how students use their free time, whether in or out of school.

Activity:

- Identify what type they do most often and how they feel about that. Which part felt more fun? More free? More structured? (Use recess, free time or another experiential activity to demonstrate this)
- Discussion: Which do you have more of—structured or unstructured time? How do you feel about that?
- What do you do in your structured time? What do you do in your unstructured time? What Live Your Why wellness themes/benefits do you get in each? When do you get more? Does it feel balanced? Do you want to change that?

Subtopic 5: Explore Passion Projects

Passion projects help students go deeper into what they care about, follow their curiosity and explore what they love to do. These projects can be fun, meaningful, and a way to try something new or build a skill.

Student goals:

- Identify personal interests they would like to explore further.
- Learn, build confidence, and express creativity through passion project exploration.

Time Frame:

- 30–60 minutes (or ongoing over several sessions)

Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

This can be a weekly, monthly, semester or year long project. It can be done multiple times a year.

Example Conversation Starters:

“What’s something you’ve always wanted to try?”

“What are you good at? What do you want to get better at? What do you want to learn more about?”

“If you could become an expert or teach a class about anything, what would it be?”

“How can you bring together your passions and things you care about to help others?”

Discussion Questions:

- Passion Brainstorm: Invite students to create a “My Ideas” sheet with activities they’d love to try (cooking, art, coding, dancing, etc.).
- LYW Wellness Themes Activity: Match potential passion projects to LYW wellness categories.

- Explore Fair (optional): Host a classroom (or school-wide) “Explore Fair” where students or visitors share hobbies or skills.

Subtopic 6: Using Live Your Why Wellness Themes to Plan and Reflect

This session introduces students to the Live Your Why (LYW) wellness themes/leisure benefits and helps them reflect on their own free time activities. Students will learn to connect activities they enjoy with their personal benefits, and begin to think about how to create more balance and variety in how they use their time.

Student goals:

- Focus on Live Your Why wellness themes/leisure benefits and plan activities based on them.
- Reflect on the balance of their free time and set a simple goal for variety.

Materials:

- [Share Your Why Activity Packet \(PDF\)](#)

Activity/Discussion (Older Elementary)

Time Frame: 30-45 minutes Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starter:

"We all spend our free time in different ways—playing, hanging out with friends, creating, helping others, or learning new things. The things we choose to do can help our minds, bodies, and hearts feel good. Today we're going to explore different ways our activities can help us feel better and grow. These are called the Live Your Why wellness themes (also known as leisure benefits)."

Sorting and Matching

Show the list and give a brief example for each theme. You can use pages from the [Live Your Why Elementary Activity Worksheets](#) to help students understand the categories in an engaging, age-appropriate way.

Hand out the wellness themes on a chart or use a page from the [Share Your Why Activity Packet](#) for planning and reflection.

Encourage a short pair/share or small group conversation about one activity and what theme it supports.

As a class, create a chart showing which themes are most and least common. Talk about why variety is important.

Have each student start with one theme from the Share Your Why Activity Packet and work towards all of the themes.

Reflect:

"What do you notice about your activities? Are they mostly in one category or spread out?"

"What's one new activity you might want to try to add variety to your free time?"

For a future program: Plan a Live Your Why group activity as a class, or incorporate into choice time or recess.

Technology Use and Free Time

In this session, students reflect on how they use technology in their free time and consider the benefits and drawbacks. Through a playful “Would You Rather?” activity and guided discussion, students explore healthy digital habits and why some limits around technology use are important. This session supports responsible decision-making and self-awareness, aligning with TimeWise, 2nd Edition goals and helping students understand the role of balance and boundaries in using tech.

The topic of technology can be integrated into most topics throughout the TW2 program.

Student Goals:

- Think about how they use technology (like tablets, phones, TVs, or computers) during their free time—both at school and at home.
- Learn about the good things and not-so-good things that can come from screen time.
- Understand what it means to have a balance between screen time and other activities.
- Talk about why adults might set screen time rules and what kinds of rules feel fair and helpful.

Introduction

“We use technology for so many things—games, shows, learning, music, and more. Today we’re going to think about how technology is a part of our free time. What do we use it for? How do we feel when we use it? And how do we make sure we’re using it in a way that’s fun, healthy, and balanced?”

Would You Rather?

1. Lead a short round of “Would You Rather?” questions using a mix of digital and non-digital options.
 - Would you rather play a video game or go sledding with friends?
 - Would you rather watch a movie or make a play with your friends?
 - Would you rather text a friend or talk to them in person?
 - Would you rather watch YouTube or go on a nature walk?

2. After each question, ask students to share why they made their choice.
3. Optional: Add questions related to: "You have already been using a screen for more than an hour....." and try "Would you rather..." again.
4. Chart answers if desired (tally results or list favorite activities).

Conversation Starters:

"Why did you choose that option?"

"Do you always choose that, or does it depend on your mood?"

"What makes one activity feel more fun or satisfying?"

Tech Talk & Limit Setting

Example Conversation Starter and Instructions:

1. Ask students: "What are some ways you use technology during your free time?"
 - o Write down or draw a few common answers on the board.
2. Then ask: "What are some rules at your house about technology?" (time limits, no screens before bed, certain types of games or apps)
3. Facilitate a group conversation about why those limits might exist. Connect back to LYW themes and physical, mental, and emotional wellness, etc.
4. Optional: Introduce the idea of Zones of Regulation to help students notice how they feel before/after screen time.

Discussion Questions:

"What do your caregivers say about how and when you use screens?"

"Do you agree with those rules? Why or why not?"

"How do you feel after using screens for a long time?"

“Are there times when technology helps you connect with people? Learn something new?”

“What does a good balance look like?”

Think about motivation in using screens:

Want to

Have to

What Someone Else Thinks (this is nuanced, Influence of friends and family/relationships could be positive or negative)

Nothing else to do

For a purpose (like to get better at something or for a specific reason, to learn a new skill or meet people)

Reflection

Have students write or draw answers to:

One thing I love to do with technology is...

One limit or habit for using technology that I think is helpful is...

One way I can balance screen time with other kinds of fun is...

Encourage students to connect this reflection to a Live Your Why wellness theme, like Working Your Brain or Connecting With People.

Wrap-Up

“Technology can be a great tool for fun, learning, and connecting with others. But just like eating too much candy, too much screen time can leave us feeling tired or grumpy or just out of balance since sometimes when we use technology, time seems to fly by, only doing one thing. When we learn to use technology in healthy ways and take breaks to do other things, we feel better overall.”

Extension Ideas:

Have students brainstorm a list of “Tech/Screen-Free Fun” ideas to post in the classroom or school.

Create a home tech/screen agreement template that families can fill out together.

Use Zones of Regulation check-ins before and after tech use for a week and reflect.



Session 3: Your Life, Your Decisions

Everyone has free time—but we all spend it differently! Free time gives us the chance to explore who we are, what matters to us, and how we want to spend our lives. This topic helps students reflect on what motivates them, how they make choices, and how they can grow into active decision-makers. It also helps them think about planning, barriers, identity, and stereotypes while learning to set meaningful goals and advocate for themselves. We'll also explore healthy and fun things to do, and how to overcome challenges or feelings that get in the way.

Subtopics

1. Why Do I Do That? Motivation & Feelings
2. Who Chooses? Choice & Self-Advocacy
3. Is It Good for Me? Healthy & Unhealthy Free Time
 - a. **Contact Healthy Lamoille Valley for additional resources regarding youth substance misuse prevention
4. What's My Goal? Planning & Dreaming
5. Can I Try That? Overcoming Stereotypes & Barriers

Books for reading or display for these topics

- [Oh, The Places You'll Go](#) by Dr. Seuss
- [Be You!](#) by Peter H. Reynolds
- [You Are Enough: A Book About Inclusion](#)
- [Happy Dreamer](#) by Peter H. Reynolds
- [The Pink Refrigerator](#) by Tim Egan

Subtopic 1: Why Do I Do That?

Motivation & Feelings

Sometimes we do things because we have to, like brushing our teeth. Sometimes we do them because we *want* to. And sometimes we do things because of what someone else thinks or just because there's nothing else to do. Let's think about why we do what we do—and how it feels.

Student goals:

- Understand “have to,” “want to,” and other motivation for our choices.
- Practice naming feelings connected to activities.
- Identify things they enjoy doing.

Timeframe

Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters

- “What do you *have* to do every day?”
- “What do you love to do when you get to choose what you do?”
- “What happens when you're bored?”

Activity Options

Game: Act or Draw It Out (Motivation Guessing)

Opening activity:

- Have students think about an activity and why they do that activity based one of the following motivations:
 - Want to
 - Have to
 - What Someone Else Thinks (this is nuanced, Influence of friends and family/relationships could be positive or negative)

- Nothing else to do
- For a purpose (like to get better at something or for a specific reason, to learn a new skill or meet people)
- Ask individual students to act out the activity they were thinking about (at home or at school or an activity, in the community, feeding a pet, playing tag, cleaning up toys)
- Students guess the activity and the motivation or have simple labels (color code for motivations)
- Ask: “How might that make someone feel?”
 - Note: Could have primary and secondary motivations
 - Does anyone else do the same activity but have another motivation? Which? How would acting that out be different? Ask them to consider riding a bike. Sometimes kids want to ride a bike because they really enjoy it. Other times they ride a bike because they have to in order to get somewhere; it is their transportation.
- Debrief

Expansion: Create a “Yesterday diary”

Use columns that say:

1. What did I do?
2. Why did I do it?

Check out the [TimeWise Workbook](#) Journal Pages 8-9 for an idea or use the Workbook Journal Page

Have students complete the yesterday diary and reflect on it individually and then as a group.

Subtopic 2: Who Chooses?

Choice & Self-Advocacy

Sometimes we pick what to do—and sometimes adults in our lives (parents/guardians or teachers) decide for us. Today we're going to talk about how we make choices, and how to speak up about things we like or want to do or try.

Student Goals:

- Understand that kids often make choices under the guidance of adults.
- Learn to express what they enjoy or don't enjoy.
- Practice self-advocacy with respectful words.

Timeframe

Flexible timing/adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Opening:

Make a picture that shows what kind of kid you are in your free time.

Example Conversation Starters

- "Who picks your after-school activities or camps and how often you have them?"
- "Do you like what you do? Would you change anything?"

Activity Options

Discussion:

- "Would you rather pick your activity, or let someone else choose it for you? and Why?"

Draw Your Ideal Afternoon/Weekend

- What do you love to do? What would it look like if you got to choose your afternoon or weekend? A Yes Day (show the trailer from the movie Yes Day- and discuss)

Discussion and Role Play: Suppose you were not allowed to do the activity you want to do, how would you negotiate with your adult what you want to do? Have students come up with things they might say to advocate for themselves.

Take-Home Prompt:

- “Ask an adult to name something *they* liked to do as a kid—and share something you’d like to do together or try!”

Subtopic 3: Is It Good for Me?

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Choices

Some things we do help us grow, feel strong, or have fun in a good way. Some things don't make us feel great after. Today we'll talk about healthy fun—and fun that might not be the best for us.

We talked about benefits in Session 2. All those benefits are healthy for us.

Student Goals:

- Talk about how activities affect our body and feelings.
- Learn what “positive risk” means (trying something new in a good way).
- Practice noticing if something helps or hurts our well-being.

Timeframe

- **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters

- “What’s something you do that helps your body?”
- “What’s something that helps your heart or mood?”
- “What is a risk that’s fun and safe?”
- “What’s something someone might do in their free time that could be harmful to them or others?”

Activity Options

Sort Game:

Use cards or pictures of activities.

Sort into:

- *Healthy for me* (e.g., biking, laughing, painting)

- *Maybe not so healthy* (e.g., too much screen time, not moving, being mean to others)

Story/Draw Prompt:

Draw or tell a story about something that made you feel strong, happy, or proud.

Have students share and discuss

Start early conversations about substance misuse prevention (as students get older add more content and discussion and refusal skills workshops).

*Contact Healthy Lamoille Valley for more support with positive youth development and youth substance misuse prevention.

Subtopic 4: What's My Goal?

Planning & Dreaming

Sometimes we just do stuff because we're bored. Some kids have too many things scheduled and feel stressed. Others feel like there's nothing to do and end up doing things they don't care about. Either way, it's important to find a balance and choose things that feel meaningful or exciting.

Student Goals:

- Understand what a goal is.
- Think about what they want more of or less of.
- Practice making a simple plan to achieve a desired goal.

Timeframe

Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters

- "What's something you'd love to try?"
- "What would you like *more* of in your free time?"
- "How can you make a plan to do that?"

Activity Options

Mission Challenge:

Pick a class goal or individual goal or "mini mission" for the week (e.g., try a new game, ask a grown-up to help with a plan).

Goal-Focused Self-Portrait:

Draw yourself **doing something you'd like to do more of** in your free time (a dream or a goal) or write it down.

Create a class collage of all goal-focused statements or self-portraits titled:

“We Are More Than Just What We Do in School!” OR “Who We Are in Our Free Time”

Subtopic 5: Can I Try That?

Overcoming Stereotypes & Barriers

We've talked about planning but what happens if things get in the way of doing activities you want to do? Sometimes people think certain activities are only for a certain gender, or only for certain people. That's not true! Everyone should be able to try new things. Those are barriers to trying out new things, and there are other barriers or roadblocks as well. It is important to examine and think about potential roadblocks to determine if they are real or just perceived and we can figure out how to overcome the barriers. Sometimes there are other roadblocks. Some of the barriers are real and sometimes perceived.

Student Goals:

- Notice stereotypes and how they make us feel.
- Talk about real and imagined barriers.
- Practice cheering for each other.

Timeframe

Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters

- "Have you ever wanted to try something but felt nervous to do so?"
- "What would you try if nobody judged you?"
- "How can we help others feel included?"

Activity Options

Barrier Busters:

Kids write or draw something they want to try. Then brainstorm with the group: What might stop you or get in the way? How can we help?

Use recess or other real life examples:

- Ask someone new to play with you
- Try a new game at recess or a new after school activity
- Sit with someone new at lunch

Share Out: With each activity shared have other students think about if they, too, would like to try to activity mentioned.



Session 4: Getting the Most Out of Your Free Time

Introduction:

Free time is a valuable part of the day where we can rest, play, be creative, or connect with others. But sometimes we don't use it in ways that truly feel good to us—we may feel bored, stuck, or just do the same things all the time. These topics help students reflect on how they use their free time, explore what they love, and build skills to bring variety, balance, and joy into everyday life.

Session Topics:

1. Explore Your Passions and Interests (See Topic: Live Your Why and Explore Your Free Time)
2. Variety and Balance
3. How to Restructure a Situation When You're Not Interested (Boredom)
4. What is Boredom and Why It's Important to Understand

Subtopic 1: Explore Your Passions and Interests

Everyone has different interests and things they enjoy. Exploring those interests can help us feel happier, more confident, and more connected to others. This session helps students reflect on what they love, what they are interested in, what is missing and what new things they might like to try.

Check out Session 2 Live Your Why and Explore Your Free Time Activities

Subtopic 2: Variety and Balance

Doing different kinds of activities helps us feel better in different ways. It's good to have a mix—some quiet time, some active activity, time with others, and time by yourself, time that is structured or planned and time that is unstructured and you have more freedom to choose. We all have responsibilities like schoolwork, out of school activities, chores, and bedtime—but we also need time to relax, play, and be with others. Finding balance helps us feel our best. Balance means not doing just one thing all the time and getting different benefits from the activities you do. Sometimes what we do can be boring and we need to find ways to turn it into something interesting to us.

Student Goals:

- Understand why variety is important
- Learn about the concept of balance in daily routines and reflect on individual routines
- Connect different activities with feelings or needs (possible use of Zones of Regulation)
- Begin exploring the idea of time management
- Think more about healthy habits around school, out of school, fun, rest, and relationships

Timeframe:

30–40 minutes, **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters:

- “What does a normal day look like for you?”
- “When do you feel too busy? When do you feel bored?”

- “What would your perfect day look like?”
- “Why do we need different types of activities to stay healthy and happy?”

Activities:

- **Daily Pie Chart:** Have students draw a circle and divide it into slices—school, out of school, rest, fun, family, screen time, etc. Reflect on which parts feel out of balance. Too much or too little. And why?
- **Lifestyle Reflection:** Talk about what adults in their lives do for balance. “What do you notice about your parents/guardians’ or teachers’ routines? How does this impact you?”
- **Plan a Healthy Day that has variety and balance:** Students draw or describe a “balanced” school day that includes learning, rest, fun, and connection.
 - Use Live Your Why to get ideas for different types of leisure/wellness themes and benefits.

Subtopic 3: How to Restructure a Situation When You're Not Interested (Boredom)

Sometimes we're in a situation where we feel bored or not interested—but we can change the way we think about it or try something new to make it better.

Student Goals:

- Develop tools to overcome being bored
- Learn how to deal with uninteresting or uncomfortable moments
- Use and strengthen creative thinking skills

Materials:

- [TimeWise Student Workbook](#) 16-17 for older elementary students (and themes for younger).

Timeframe:

30–40 minutes **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters:

- “What do you do when something feels boring?”
- “Can you remember a time you made something more fun or interesting?”
- “What are some tricks to make boring things better?”

Activities:

- Boring to Fun Brainstorm: List things that students find boring (bus or car rides, waiting, chores, school tasks) and have them brainstorm ways to make them more interesting (pretend it's a game, challenge yourself, find something funny).

- Introduce and do Page 17 in the [TimeWise Student Workbook](#). Then, role play with partners:
 - Act out a boring situation and show how to make it better, etc.
- Based on the activity on Page 17
 - Create a Toolbox List: Students write or draw 3–5 ideas they can try when something feels boring.

Subtopic 4: What is Boredom and Why It's Important to Understand

Boredom is a feeling we all get sometimes. It might feel annoying or uncomfortable, but it can also be helpful. It's your brain's way of saying you need a change—something more fun, meaningful, or challenging.

Student Goals:

- Learn that boredom is a sign that they might need to change their situation
- Connect boredom to emotions and regulation
- Become more aware and reflect on these topics

Materials:

- [TimeWise Student Workbook](#) 16-17 for older Elementary students (and themes for younger).
- Teacher Manual - Transparency 4

Timeframe:

25–30 minutes **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters:

- “How do you feel when you’re bored?”
- “Where do you feel boredom in your body?”
- “What is your brain telling you when you're bored?”

Materials:

[Check out Zones of Regulation](#)

See Workbook and Transparency pages below.

Activities:

- Feelings Check-In: Invite students to describe what boredom feels like physically or emotionally.
- [Zone Match](#): Identify which emotional regulation zone boredom might belong in and why. *Green – calm, ready to learn; Blue – relaxed or resting; Red – angry or out of control; Yellow – too silly or distracted*
- Draw or Journal: “Draw your ‘bored face’ and then draw what you wish you could be doing.”
- What can you do in a situation that is boring? How does the change in situation impact impact how you feel?
- Group Discussion



Session 5: Negotiating Free Time During Transitions

Transitions happen all the time, some small and some big. Some we choose, and some just happen to us. For example, transition to and from school, the weather changes from warm to cold, the school year ends and summer vacation begins, or a weekend or vacation comes and goes. Bigger changes might be a family move, a new sibling, a close one dies or parents changes jobs. These transitions can affect how we spend our free time and how we feel. This session helps students notice these changes and think about what they want to keep or change in their free time.

***** Worthwhile to revisit this session at different times throughout the year surrounding transitions.**

Timeframe:

30–40 minutes **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Student Goals:

- Notice how their free time changes during different transitions.
- Reflect on how they feel during both small and big transitions and consider how free time activities can support their well-being and balance.

- Identify something they want to keep doing or try changing in their free time during times of transition.

Example Conversation Starters for different transitions:

- “What do you like to do during the time when you’re getting ready to leave school/program/activity or when you first arrive?”
 - “How do you feel during the times when you’re coming to school or going home? What helps you have a good start or end to your day?”
 - “What do you like to do when you first get home from school/program/activity?”
- “How does your free time change when the weather gets colder or warmer?”
- “What do you do differently during summer vacation or winter break compared to school days?”
- “Have you ever moved to a new house or had a new family member join your family? How did that change your free time? What other times in your life change your free time?”
- “What are some transitions you choose, like trying a new sport or hobby? Knowing when you are bored and need to do something else?”
- “What are some transitions that just happen, like changing seasons or starting a new grade?”
 - “How do you feel when these changes happen?”
- “Is there anything you want to change about your free time during these times?”

Activities:

1. Free Time Pattern Drawing

Timeframe:

10–15 minutes for each situation Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Ask:

Draw or write what you usually do during your free time in these times:

- When you get home from school
- On weekends
- When the weather is warm (like summer)
- When the weather is cold (like winter)
- When it is sunny or raining or snowing!
- During the school year
- During summer vacation or other school breaks

Follow-up questions:

- “What stays the same? What changes?”
- “Can you think of something new you tried during one of these changes? Or something you were already doing but wanted to keep doing?”

2. Group Brainstorm: Types of Transitions

Timeframe:

10-15 minutes Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

On the board or chart paper, make two columns:

Transitions We Choose:	Transitions That Happen To Us:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(some ideas to help with prompt)</i>• Choose to get off a screen/stop screen time• Choose to use a screen• Trying a new hobby or sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(some ideas to help with prompt)</i>• An adult asks us to turn off a screen we are using.• Coming home after school

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather changes (summer to winter)
Choosing to spend more time with friends	Starting a new school year
Picking a new game to play or choosing to stop screen time	Moving to a new house
Planning a vacation activity	Family changes (new baby, parents' job changes)
Setting new routines and activities	School vacations

Ask:

“How do these different transitions make you feel?”

“What changes in your free time with these transitions?”

3. Reflection: What Could Change?

Timeframe:

(10 minutes)

Ask students to think:

“Is there something you do during your free time that you want to keep doing no matter what?”

“Is there something you’d like to try, change, or stop doing during some of these transitions?”

Invite students to draw or write:

- One thing I want to keep doing
- One thing I want to try or change

Invite volunteers to share one thing they noticed about transitions or one way they want to change their free time habits.

Main ideas to bring into the conversation:

- Some transitions are small and happen all the time; others are big and feel very different
- We can decide how to use our free time during these changes to feel happy and balanced
- Transitions can be a chance to try new things or keep what works best for us



Session 6: Community Resources, Belonging and Leisure as a Human Right

We all belong to many communities—our neighborhood, family, schools, programs and groups we spend time with. When we know what’s around us—like parks, libraries, afterschool activities, and fun spaces, we can find or create enjoyable things to do, explore new interests, and create a sense of belonging.

This session also reminds us that free time and play are not just fun, they are rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) says every child has the right to play, relax, express themselves, and participate in culture and community. Leisure has the potential to help everyone feel valued, connected, and included. We all have a part in making sure everyone gets those chances.

Session Topics:

- Mapping Our Community and School Resources
- Relationships and Belonging in Free Time (with equity lens)
- Leisure as a Human Right
- Helping Others and Creating Opportunities

Subtopic 1: Mapping Our Community and School Resources

There are places around us (sometimes a few and sometimes many) at school and in town where we can play, create, or learn. When we know where to look, we can try new things and make choices that feel good to us and others.

Student goals:

- Identify leisure activities available in their school and local community
- Explore and show curiosity about new free time opportunities
- Begin to understand how the community helps support free time and leisure activities

Timeframe:

30–40 minutes **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions. Example Conversation Starters:

Example Conversation Starters:

- “Where do you like to play or go for fun?”
- “What activities do you like to do outside of school? During different seasons?”
- “Is there a place you’d like to go to during free time afterschool, on weekends or vacation but haven’t yet? Is there a type of place you would like to visit but don’t know where or how to do it?”

Activity Options:

Creative drawing:

- Give students blank maps of the school or community, or have them create their own (individually or as a group)
- Have them gather or create images of local places and programs.
- Invite them to draw or label places they know, enjoy, or want to try on the map.

- Use color coding to identify these place: places they *already know*, *want to visit*, or *want to create*.

Interactive version- Moving around the space:

- Post signs, icons or images of local spots and programs around the room.
(Students can even create these in advance to use for this purpose)
- Have students “travel” around the room, placing sticky notes:
 - I’ve been here
 - I want to try this
 - We could add something like this to our school or in our community

Debrief

Subtopic 2: Relationships and Belonging in Free Time

We often choose how to spend our time based on the people we care about. Friends, classmates, and family help us feel connected, and we can do the same for others. Making sure everyone feels welcome and included makes free time more fun with opportunities for all.

Student Goals:

- Explore how relationships influence leisure choices (and vice versa)— and how leisure can strengthen relationships
- Understand the importance of inclusion and equity in play and social connection
- Notice exclusion and begin to practice ways to respond or include others

Timeframe:

- 30–40 minutes **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters:

- “Who do you like to spend time with during free time?”
- “When do YOU choose the activity or location and then play with who is there?”
“When does the opposite happen?”
- “Have you ever felt left out or seen someone else feel left out?”
- “What can we do to make sure everyone feels included?”

Activity Options:

Interactive role-play:

- Brainstorm or Create short “inclusion scenarios” like:
 - A student is sitting alone at recess.
 - A new classmate doesn’t know how to play a game.
 - Someone wants to play but uses a wheelchair.

- Act out or discuss: “What could we do in this situation to help everyone feel welcome?”

Equity reflection:

- Ask:
 - “Does everyone always get the same chances to play?”
 - “What might make it hard for some kids to join in?”

Create a class “Inclusion Pledge” or “We ALL Belong” visual or project

Subtopic 3: Leisure as a Human Right

The United Nations says all children have the right to play, rest, and be part of fun and cultural activities. That means everyone deserves time to do things that make them feel happy, calm, and connected, not just sometimes, but all the time.

Student goals:

- Recognize that leisure and play are part of children's rights
- Reflect on fairness and access to play, increasing empathy for others
- Understand that leisure is meaningful and an important part of a healthy life

Timeframe:

- 30–40 minutes **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple session

Example Conversation Starters:

- “What happens when people don’t get enough free time? Children? Adults? People you know?”
- “Why do you think play and rest are rights?”
- “What would you want to tell someone who doesn’t think play is important?”

Activity Options:

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) rights Activity:

What is a “right”?

- “Can you think of something every child *should* have or be able to do?”

There is a big list of rights written by countries around the world, through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Let's explore the [UNCRC rights](#).

- **Every child has the right to:**
 - **Relax and play** (Article 31)
 - Freedom of **expression** (Article 13)
 - **Be safe** from violence (Article 19)
 - An **education** (Article 28)
 - Protection of **identity** (Article 8)
 - **Sufficient** standard of **living** (Article 27)
 - **Know** their **rights** (Article 42)
 - Health and **health services** (Article 24)
- Create Posters for a few of them.
 - Start with the first bullet: Relax and Play.
 - "What does this mean to you? Why do you think this is important?"

Add on: Place Posters around the room with simplified [UNCRC rights](#) ("You have the right to play," "You have the right to rest," "You have the right to be heard").

- Students walk around and respond verbally, directly on the posters or with sticky notes:
 - "This right matters because..."
 - "I wish everyone could..."
- Debrief

Subtopic 4: Helping Others and Creating Opportunities

Spending free time helping others is a powerful way to feel good and make the community stronger. And when we see that something is missing—like an opportunity, activity or a group that doesn’t exist, we can be the ones to help.

Student Goals:

- Learn that helping others can be a fun and meaningful way to spend free time
- Use their imagination and ideas to create new ways to play and enjoy free time
- Practice including others and making sure everyone feels welcome

Timeframe:

- 30–40 minutes **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple session

Example Conversation Starters:

- “Has anyone ever helped you feel included? Have you ever helped a friend have more fun or feel included?”
- “What’s something you wish your school or community had?”
- “How could we create something new for ourselves or others?”

Educator notes:

- Use Live Your Why to Support these activities, especially the “Connecting with people” and “Getting to know your community” sections!
- For more ideas check out **Recess, Explore/Club Time, and Out-of-School Time**

Community Kindness Brainstorm:

- Ask: “What are ways we can help others during recess or free time?”
- Brainstorm and look through LYW for ideas and discuss and/or record on chart paper.
- Group ideas into:
 - Helping during school and out of school activities
 - Helping create new ideas
 - Helping people feel safe and included
 - Other categories

Build Your Why Challenge!

- Use other activities in this overall topic and LYW to think about different types of opportunities to create something new or enhance an existing opportunity: a recess/free time activity, a club, a game, a space, etc.
- Then, in small groups (or another model), students design a new opportunity or a few.
- Share out:
 - What is it?
 - Who is it for?
 - How does it help the community?

Help students plan for bringing their ideas to fruition! Even small steps (acknowledge some ideas may be easier than others to implement)

Reflection Ideas for Session 6:

- “One thing I learned about my rights is...”
- “One way I can help someone feel like they belong is...”
- “One thing I want to try in my free time is...”
- “One new idea I want to create for my class, school or community is...”